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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **VICTIMS' RIGHTS BILL HEADS TO HOUSE FLOOR**

*House Bill 940 Advances to House Floor for Debate*

(Baton Rouge, LA)---In conjunction with National Crime Victims Rights Week, Attorney General Buddy Caldwell announced today that the House Committee on Administration of Criminal Justice has advanced a victims' rights piece of legislation, House Bill 940, entitled "Victims' Rights to a Jury Trial," to the House floor for debate and a full vote.

Under current Louisiana law, a criminal defendant has the exclusive right to decide whether to waive his or her right to a jury trial and be tried by the court alone as a strategy decision. The proposed law, already enacted in the federal system and in 30 states, simply allows the victim of crime to have an equal say in the process by conditioning the defendant's right to waiver on the consent of the victim's representative, the prosecution. This bill, initiated by Attorney General Caldwell and introduced by Representative Montoucet, constitutes a vital part of Attorney General Caldwell's ongoing effort to level the playing field in criminal prosecutions through an emphasis on the rights of victims of crime.

We would like to thank the following agencies for supporting this legislation in an ongoing effort to give victims equal rights in the fight against crime: The Louisiana Sheriffs Association, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, Crimestoppers of

Greater New Orleans and Greater Baton Rouge area, Louisiana Association of Victims  
Against Sexual Assault, Metropolitan Crime Commission and Crime Fighters.